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CONAN THE KING
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ON THE PLAINS OF ZINGARA, PRINCE CONN COMMANDS THE AQUILONIAN FORCES WHILE HIS FATHER HOVERS BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH. AN ASSASSIN'S ARROW, GUIDED BY THE SORCERER CRASSUS, HAS STRUCK KING CONAN WITH WHAT WOULD APPEAR TO BE A MORTAL WOUND.

WHILE CONN AWAITS WORD OF HIS FATHER'S FATE, THE ENEMY ARMIES OF ARGOS AND OPHIR HAVE STRUCK THE AQUILONIAN LINES A SHATTERING BLOW. NOW THE WARRING ARMIES REGROUP TO CLASH IN ANOTHER BLOODY CHAPTER IN A SAGA.

OUT WITH IT, PALLANTIDES. I WANT THE TRUTH OR NOTHING AT ALL. CAN WE HOLD OFF ANOTHER ASSAULT?

OUR RIGHT FLANK HAS COLLAPSED, MY PRINCE, AND THE ENEMY CALVARY IS MASSING FOR ANOTHER CHARGE. MITRA ALONE KNOWS WHAT THE OUTCOME WILL BE.

MY PRINCE, LET OLD GAIUS FLAVIUS TAKE OUR REMAINING KNIGHTS AND LANCERS OUT TO MEET THEM. IF MITRA IS SMILING, WE MAY BE ABLE TO BREAK THEIR CHARGE, AND GIVE YOU TIME TO REGROUP OUR FORCES.

AYE, THAT'S A DESPERATE PLAN, BUT IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE.

OF SORCERY AND STEEL

DON KRAAR STORY • MIKE DOCHERTY PENCILS • FRAJA BATOR INKS • JANICE CHIANG LETTERS • GEORGE ROUSSOS COLORS • LARRY HAMA EDITOR • JIM SHOOTER EDITOR IN CHIEF

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PRINCE CONN, ALLOW YOUR ZINGARAN ALLIES TO CLEAR THE ROAD TO KORDAVA FOR YOU. WIN OR LOSE, WE'LL DRENCH THE EARTH IN OUR ENEMIES' BLOOD.

I LIKE YOUR SPIRIT, KARIM FEZ, BUT YOU'D HAVE TO FACE YOUR OWN COUNTRYMEN WHO HAVE SIDED WITH THE ENEMY. THAT'S MORE THAN I CAN ASK.

THE OFFER WAS MADE BEFORE YOU ASKED, NOBLE PRINCE. THE MORE TRAITORS WE KILL TODAY, THE MORE SWEAT WE'LL SAVE THE HEADSMAN LATER IF MITRA GRANTS US VICTORY.

THEN MOVE YOUR MEN INTO POSITION, KARIM FEZ. MAY THE GODS RIDE WITH YOU.

THE ENEMY IS MOVING INTO POSITION, MY PRINCE. WHAT IS YOUR WILL?

MY WILL? NOT TO WEAR MY FATHER'S CROWN BEFORE MY TIME, GAIUS.

THEY'LL BE ON US SOON, CONN. WILL YOU GIVE US THE ORDER TO JOIN KARIM FEZ?

YOU MEAN ORDER YOU TO LAY DOWN YOUR LIVES, DON'T YOU, GAIUS?

WE MADE THE OFFER EVEN BEFORE OUR ZINGARAN ALLIES. ISN'T THAT RIGHT, SERVIUS?

AYE, GAIUS, THAT YOU DID.

GAIUS FLAVIUS, ASSEMBLE YOUR MEN ON THE VALLEY FLOOR ALONG SIDE KARIM FEZ'S ZINGARANS. DRIVE THE ENEMY BACK AND BRING US WITHIN SIGHT OF KORDAVA BEFORE NIGHTFALL.

AYE, MY PRINCE, THAT'S WHAT WE LIKE TO HEAR. KEEP TALKING LIKE THAT. YOU'RE BEGINNING TO SOUND LIKE A KING.

OUR COMMANDER, PRINCE CONN, WANTS TO SEE THE CITY OF KORDOVA BEFORE NIGHTFALL. BUT WE'LL HAVE TO DRIVE THOSE MAGGOTS OUT OF THE VALLEY FIRST.

I LONG FOR A GLIMPSE OF THE TOWERS OF KORDAVA AGAIN. THEY'RE BEAUTIFUL AT SUNSET, GAIUS.

I'VE NEVER SEEN THE TOWERS OF KORDAVA AT DUSK, KARIM.

TAKE MY WORD FOR IT, MY FRIEND. THE VIEW IS WORTH ANY PRICE.

IT'S NOT YET NOON AND KORDAVA IS HALF A DAY'S RIDE FROM HERE.

PREPARE TO CHARGE--AND REMEMBER...

...MITRA WAITS ON THE ROAD TO KORDAVA!

CHARGE!

CROM AND MITRA, SO THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING A KING INCLUDES WATCHING YOUR OWN MEN RIDE TO THEIR DEATHS.

STAND FAST, COMRADES! THE PRINCE WANTS TO SEE KORDAVA THIS DAY!

AYE, BUT MANY OF US WILL BE SEEING MITRA FIRST!

PRINCE CONN, WE ARE TOO FEW TO STOP THE ENEMY ADVANCE!

WE COULD SEE THAT FROM HERE, KARIM FEZ.

GIVE US WHATEVER REINFORCEMENTS, YOU CAN, O PRINCE, BEFORE THEY DRIVE US OUT OF ZINGARA OR WIPE US OUT.

PALLANTIDES, SERVIUS GALLANNUS, RALLY OUR TROOPS AND JOIN KARIM FEZ AND GAIUS FLAVIUS...

GAIUS -- WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIM?

TO ARMS, LADS! IT'S STILL MORNING AND THERE'S WORK TO BE DONE! RALLY ON ME!

STOP SHOUTING, PALLANTIDES. IT WON'T STOP THE WOUNDED FROM BLEEDING OR FROM DYING.

EVEN A CAMP FOLLOWER CAN SEE THAT IT WILL TAKE MORE THAN BOLD WORDS TO RALLY THE TROOPS THIS MORNING.

BUT GIVE US WEAPONS AND WE'LL JOIN IN THE RANKS ALONG SIDE THE MEN.

FAIR ENOUGH, GLISANDE. YOU ALWAYS WERE A SPIRITED WENCH.

LOOK, GENERAL, RIDERS COMING FROM THE EAST!

WHO ARE THEY? I CAN'T SEE--THE MORNING SUN IS IN MY EYES.

I WOULDN'T DARE TO SAY, MY LORD.

IT LOOKS LIKE... BUT, IT CAN'T BE...

ONLY ONE MAN SITS A HORSE LIKE THAT!

A MAN OR A GHOST?

FATHER, WE ARE TOO LATE!

NAY. WE ARE JUST IN TIME, RADEGUND.

RUFIO, TAKE MY DAUGHTER UP ON THE HEIGHTS OUT OF HARM'S WAY!

PERYCK, RALLY THE CIMMERIANS AND THE AESIR ON MY LEFT FLANK!

AYE, MY KING!

IT WILL BE AN HONOR, KING CONAN!

PALLANTIDES, IF YOU SIT THERE WITH YOUR MOUTH HANGING OPEN LIKE THAT FLIES WILL NEST IN IT.

MY KING, FORGIVE ME, WE WERE ALL WAITING FOR WORD OF YOUR DEATH.

REPORTS OF MY DEATH ARE ALWAYS A LITTLE EXAGGERATED.

THE VIEW OF THE GREAT WESTERN OCEAN AT KORDAVA IS A GREAT SIGHT TO BEHOLD. THAT'S WHERE I'M GOING. WHO'S GOING WITH ME?

IN THE ENEMY RANKS...

THE AQUILONIANS ARE MASSING FOR ANOTHER ATTACK. YOU'D THINK THEY WOULD HAVE HAD ENOUGH BY NOW.

DON'T BE SO IMPATIENT. TODAY IS OUR CHANCE TO PAY THEM BACK.

AYE. THEY'LL PAY DEARLY, TOO. THEY'RE LOST WITHOUT THEIR KING.

THERE'S NO SENSE IN LYING TO OURSELVES, MY PRINCE. THIS IS THE END. WITH THIS NEXT ASSAULT THEY'LL OUTFLANK US AND CRUSH US IN A VICE.

I'M SORRY I LED YOU TO THIS, SERVIUS. I HAVEN'T MANAGED TO DO MY FATHER MUCH CREDIT TODAY.

NO, CONN. YOU DID AS WELL AS ANY MAN COULD. OUR LUCK HAS PLAYED OUT. THAT'S ALL.

GREAT MITRA'S SHADOW, HAVE THE GODS DECIDED TO DRIVE ME MAD BEFORE I DIE?

CONN, MY SON, YOU AND SERVIUS MOUNT UP AND BRING YOUR TROOPS ON MY RIGHT FLANK!

I'M GOING TO KORDAVA!

BY CROM, FATHER, WE'LL SEE KORDAVA BEFORE SUNDOWN!

THE ENEMY HOST DOESN'T KNOW I'VE RETURNED. SHALL WE SURPRISE THEM?

AYE, WE'LL SURPRISE THEM TO DEATH!

TO THE DEATH!

TO THE DEATH!

THE ROAD TO KORDAVA WILL BE A BLOODY ONE, CONAN OLD FRIEND. THE ENEMY IS ALMOST TWO TO OUR ONE!

AYE, CROM is GOOD.

I'M GOING TO KORDAVA, WHO'S COMING WITH ME?

GIVE US THE COMMAND, O KING.

CONQUEST OR DEATH!

TAKE THIS, YOU ARGOSSEAN SCUM!

IT'S KING CONAN--HE'S BACK FROM THE DEAD!

STAND FAST, DOGS! WE'LL PAVE THE ROAD TO KORDAVA WITH YOUR BONES!

AYE, I'VE COME BACK FROM THE GATES OF ARALLU TO GET YOU, CRASSUS!

COME QUICKLY, PRINCE CONN, AND BRING THE KING. THERE S SOMETHING YOU MUST SEE.

WHAT IS IT, KUAGA?

WE D BETTER LET HIM SHOW US, CONN.

AYE, AND THEN IT WILL BE MY TURN.

MAKE HASTE, MY PRINCE YOU WANTED TO SEE KORDAVA BEFORE THE SUNSET. DIDN'T YOU?

THERE, YOU SEE...

AYE, KORDAVA, CROWN CITY OF ZINGARA, JUST AS I REMEMBER IT.

WE PAID A HEAVY TOLL TO REACH IT, FATHER

IT WAS A GREAT PRICE, MY PRINCE, GREATER THAN YOU KNOW.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, PALLANTIDES?

THERE S SOMETHING ELSE YOU MUST SEE.

WE ONLY FOUND HIM A FEW MOMENTS, AGO, CONN.

GAIUS...

GAIUS.. GAIUS FLAVIUS...NO!

IT'S A BITTER BLOW FOR YOU, CONN, BUT GAIUS WOULD HAVE NEVER WANTED YOU TO BLAME YOURSELF.

HE FELL BEFORE HE EVER CAST EYES ON THE CITY DON T BE ASHAMED TO SHED TEARS CONN HE WAS MY *FRIEND*, TOO.

HE WAS MY FRIEND FROM THE TIME I CAN FIRST REMEMBER, KUFIO.

HE HAD TIME FOR ME WHEN MY FATHER DION T GAIUS TAUGHT ME TO RIDE, TO SWIM, AND TO HOLD A SWORD LIKE A MAN

AND I ORDERED HIM TO HIS DEATH.

NO, HE OFFERED TO MAKE THE SACRIFICE TO BUY YOU TIME

QUICK, CONN, LOOK!

LOOK TO THE KING! CATCH HIM BEFORE HE FALLS!

HE MUST HAVE REOPENED HIS WOUND.

GENTLY NOW. LOWER HIM TO THE GROUND

HE SHOULD NEVER HAVE LED THE CHARGE

IF HE HADN T, PALLANTIDES THE ENEMY MIGHT HAVE DRIVEN US FROM THE FIELD.

BE CAREFUL, KUALA, OR MY FATHER MAY NOT LIVE TO LEAD ANOTHER ONE.

I HAVE HIM, CONN, DON'T WORRY.

I DON'T KNOW HOW NOT TO WORRY ABOUT HIM. BRING THE SURGEONS QUICKLY I M NOT EAGER TO INHERIT HIS CROWN JUST YET

LATER IN THE AQUILONIAN ENCAMPMENT OUTSIDE KORDAVA

FATHER, FOR ONCE WILL YOU LISTEN TO THE SURGEON?

AYE, FOR ONCE WILL YOU LISTEN TO SOMEBODY?

YOU'VE SUFFERED A WOUND THAT WOULD HAVE KILLED A LESSER MAN BUT IF YOU KEEP EXERTING YOURSELF THERE'LL BE NOTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU BECAUSE YOU'LL BE *DEAD*-- *DEAD*, YOU HEAR ME?

AYE, I HEAR YOU, SURGEON

YOUR MAJESTY, THE QUEEN AND COUNT TROCERO ARE APPROACHING

CONAN, MY HUSBAND, WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING HERALDS WITH WORD OF YOUR DEATH.

ZENOBIA, REPORTS OF MY DEATH ARE USUALLY EXAGGERATED.

BESIDES, I HAVE TO LIVE TO KEEP MY VOW TO FIND OUR SON, TAURUS

AND I WILL NOT DIE BEFORE I SEE KORDAVA UNDER AN AQUILONIAN BANNER.

WE HAVE THE CITY BESIEGED, MY LIEGE WE CAN EITHER STORM IT OR STARVE THEM OUT.

THE ARGOSEAN FLEET IS IN PORT AT KORAVA THE ONLY ESCAPE ROUTE FOR PALLANTIDES AND QUEENLY RAID THE CERNIA

AND THEN WHAT, PALLANTIDES?

IF THEY ESCAPE, WE'VE GOT TO STOP THEM FROM [illegible] THE KORAVAN FLEET [illegible] ATTACK ARGOS [illegible]

FROM THE LOOK ON HAGAN'S FACE, I'D SAY WE'VE GOT MORE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS.

CONAN... CONAN...

AYE, THERE'S BEEN UNREST AMONG OUR AESIR ALLIES.

IF THOSE NORTHMEN DON'T HAVE ENEMY SKULLS TO SPLIT, THEY START SPLITTING EACH OTHERS

AYE, RUFIO, HAVING THE AESIR FOR ALLIES IS LIKE KEEPING A DEMON ON A LEASH.

THE THANES OF ASGARD HAVE ASSEMBLED TO CHOOSE A KING FOR [illegible] AND [illegible] HAS SWORN TO PULL THE AESIR OUT AND RETURN TO ASGARD.

THE AESIR SWORE AN OATH OF FEALTY TO ME. I INTEND TO HOLD THEM TO IT IF I HAVE TO KILL [illegible]

YOU HEARD THE SURGEON, CONAN. YOU'RE [illegible] TO KILL ANYONE

I WONDER IF THERE'S A [illegible] TO [illegible] A MAN OF STUBBORNESS

COME, WHICH OF YOU WOULD DISPUTE MY CLAIM TO THE THRONE OF ASGARD? I SAY THE CROWN IS MINE BY RIGHT OF BIRTH! I'LL TAKE IT BY FORCE OF ARMS IF NEED BE!

NO ONES DENIES YOUR CLAIM OF ROYAL BIRTH, ARN BUT THERE'S ANOTHER WHO CAN MAKE AS GOOD A CLAIM

THE THRONE OF ASGARD HAS BEEN DORMANT FOR GENERATIONS ARN IS RIGHT ABOUT ONE THING -- WE SHOULD CHOOSE A NEW KING.

AYE, BUT THE MATTER MUST BE SETTLED IN SINGLE COMBAT THAT WAY THE GODS CHOOSE OUR KING FOR US.

ARN, YOU ARE A TROUBLE MAKER YOU MUST STOP THIS.

I ONLY HOPE YOU'VE RECOVERED SUFFICIENTLY TO TRY, CONAN

KING CONAN! YOU ARE A BARBARIAN YOURSELF. AFTER I'VE SPLIT YOUR SKULL, NO ONE WILL DARE TO STOP ME FROM PULLING OUT THE AESIR

NO, FATHER, YOU CAN'T!

RADEGUND, THE AESIR SWORE AN OATH TO ME. I HAVE TO MEET THEIR CHALLENGE IF I'M GOING TO HOLD THEM TO IT.

YOUR WOUND WILL REOPEN AGAIN AND THIS TIME THERE'LL BE NOTHING ANY SURGEON CAN DO ABOUT IT.

THERE! YOUR CHALLENGE HAS BEEN ANSWERED, ARN!

BY YMIR, WHO'D BE SO BOLD?

YOU, YOU YOUNG WHELP, YOU THINK YOU CAN DEFEAT ME? YOU'LL BE IN FOR A SURPRISE BEFORE YOU DIE.

I HAVE A SURPRISE FOR YOU FIRST, ARN.

MY CLAIM TO THE THRONE IS EVEN MORE DIRECT THAN YOURS. THE BLOOD OF THE ANCIENT KINGS OF ASGARD FLOWS IN MY VEINS.

DERYCK--NO!

ROYAL BLOOD, YOU SAY? WELL, LET'S SHED SOME OF IT AND SEE!

CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON, ARN

TORVOLD, FETCH *BRAGENE* FOR ME!

HERE *SHE* IS, ARN!

WELL, *BRAGENE*, HERE'S ANOTHER OUR WHO LONGS TO COURT YOUR FAVORS AND EVERYONE THAT TASTES YOUR *KISS* NEVER DREAMED IT WOULD BE SUCH A SHORT ACQUAINTANCE.

REMEMBER, YOU'RE BOUND BY THE LAW OF ASGARD. THERE MUST BE NO REPRISALS FROM THE KINSMEN OF THE VANQUISHED AGAINST THE VICTOR.

I APPRECIATE THE LOAN OF THE AXE, TOKE.

DON'T WORRY HAGAN I WON'T HAVE ANY HARD FEELINGS AFTER I'VE KILLED HIM, HA HA, HA...

USE IT WELL, PERYCK, I CAN'T STOMACH THE IDEA OF HAVING ARN AS MY KING.

PERYCK! OH, CONN, I CAN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT OF LOSING HIM!

STEADY--KEEP QUIET, YOU MUSTN'T DISTRACT HIM.

COME ALONG BOY BRAGENE IS LONGING FOR YOU!

YOU FIGHT WITH HOT AIR

SEE HOW YOU LIKE *BRAGENE'S KISS*, YOU WHELP

BRACENE LIKE YOU I CAN TELL!

BUT WHETHER THEY'RE STRETCHED OUT FLEERS THEY'RE ALL THE SAME TO HER!

YOU'RE INEXPERIENCED WITH THE ARE BOY THAT'S JUST THE WAY BRACENE LIKE'S 'EM!

AYE ALL MEN ARE ALIKE IN DEATH!

DERYCK!

QUIET! OR YOU'LL GET THEM KILLED!

ARN IS QUICK ON HIS FEET FOR A HUMAN

IF ONLY THERE WERE A CLAN TITLE FOR HIM

AYE QUICK AND VICIOUS

BEFORE "BRAGENE" MAKES A DOZEN STROKES THERE'LL BE A NEW KING IN ASGARD AND YOU'LL BE IN VALHALLA, BOY!

YMIR TAKE YOU, DOG! MY NEXT STROKE WILL SPLIT YOUR SKULL!

NOT BEFORE ONE OF US DRAWS FIRST BLOOD, YOU BRAGGART!

AND THE HONOR IS MINE!

YMIR'S BLOOD!

ARN, YOU RE AS FULL OF HOT AIR AS A BLACKSMITH'S BELLOWS

NO, IT'S YOUR BLOOD, ARN! HOW DO YOU LIKE THE SIGHT OF IT?

BY THE GODS SO IT IS DERYCK

NOW I'LL WASH [illegible] IN YOUR BLOOD AND SETTLE THIS MATTER ONCE AND FOR ALL!

I'LL NEED BOTH HANDS TO WIELD HER YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO RUN FROM US AND YOU HAVE NOWHERE TO RUN

I'M STILL STANDING MY GROUND!

NOT FOR LONG!

TWO STROKES, ARN-- YOU'LL HAVE TO FINISH SLOWER THAN YOU MAKE TEN MORE TO MAKE A SUPPER OF YOUR BOAST!

DON'T BE IMPATIENT, BOY, YOUR LIFE WILL BE OVER SOON ENOUGH!

RADEGUND, I TOLD YOU YOU COULD GET HIM KILLED IF YOU DON'T KEEP QUIET!

FATHER, YOU'VE GOT TO STOP IT!

THERE IS NO STOPPING IT.

AYE...

IT'S THE AESIR DANCE OF DEATH ONCE IT'S BEGUN ONLY ONE OF THEM CAN WALK AWAY

THAT'S EIGHT STROKES, ARN!

YOU'LL BE IN THE ARMS OF YMIR'S DAUGHTER BEFORE I COUNT TWELVE.

NINE-- LOOSING BLOOD IS MAKING YOU CLUMSY, ARN

BUT I'LL HELP YOU ALONG.

... HELP YOU ALONG TO ARALLU!

AKRGHHH.

THE COUNT ISN'T OVER YET, BERYCK. I'VE STILL GOT TWO MORE STROKES TO GO

THEN LET'S HAVE THEM, ARN

STILL STANDING YOUR GROUND, DERYCK? YOU'RE GAME, I'LL SAY THAT FOR YOU. JUST LIKE YOUR FATHER, ROLF.

AYE, YOU NEVER DARED CHALLENGE HIM

I M GOING TO DO TO YOU WHAT CONAN DID TO HIM!

WHERE-- IN ARALU?

THAT WAS TEN, ARN - THE COUNT IS OVER!

ARRRGGGHHH ..

AYE, TO THE DEATH!

KILL HIM! KILL HIM!

YOUR CLAIM TO THE THRONE MUST BE SEALED IN BLOOD!

KILL, KILL, KILL...

FINISH HIM, DERYCK!

GO ON, YOU KNOW THE LAW!

THERE'S NO CHOICE NOW!

AYE, NO CHOICE... NO CHOICE AT ALL..

NOW YOU KNOW HOW IT FEELS, DERYCK. DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO

DON T WATCH RAVEGUND, OR YOU LL SEE IT AGAIN AND AGAIN IN YOUR DREAMS

DERYCK, YOUR FATHER WAS A THANE OF ASGARD LIKE ME WE WERE COMRADES FOR HIS SAKE, MAKE IT SWIFT AND I LL DRINK A TOAST TO YOU IN VALHALLA

I WON T NEED THE FROST GIANT S DAUGHTER WAIT NO FOR YOU ARN

HAIL DERYCK KING OF ASGARD!

WE'LL CROWN YOU IN KORDAVA OR WHATEVER'S LEFT OF IT AFTER WE TAKE IT!

IT'S THE WILL OF THE GODS!

AYE, SO ZELATA THE WITCH WAS RIGHT. THIS WAS THE DESTINY THAT WAS WAITING FOR ME.'

HAIL, DERYCK, KING OF THE AESIR!

ZELATA FORETOLD IT AND I'VE LIVED TO SEE IT. DERYCK WILL BE THE KING OF THESE NORTHMEN AS WELL AS MY SON-IN-LAW

SPEAK UP, DERYCK, A KING DOESN'T ASK PERMISSION TO ADDRESS ANOTHER MONARCH

THEN I REMIND YOU THAT YOU MADE A PROMISE TO ME. A KING MUST HAVE A QUEEN. RAREGUND IS PART OF MY DESTINY. IF THE GODS ARE KIND SHE'LL BEAR ME SONS

THAT'LL BE UP TO HER. SHE IS FREE TO DO AS SHE PLEASES, YOU KNOW HOW HEADSTRONG SHE IS.

I LIKE DERYCK, CONAN. HE REMINDS ME OF YOU. NOW IF WE COULD ONLY FIND OUR SON, TAURUS, MY HAPPINESS WOULD BE COMPLETE.

IT LOOKS AS IF HE'S FOUND LIKE SHE'S DESTINY, TOO

I HAVE SCOUTS SCOURING THE COUNTRYSIDE TO LEARN WHERE CRASSUS HAS HIDDEN HIM, ZENOBIA. IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME NOW

AYE, WHY NOT? I'VE GROWN TO LIKE THAT NORTHMAN, TOO

BY THE LOOK ON YOUR FACES, TROCERO, YOU AND PALLANTIDES AND SERVIUS HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO TELL ME.

WELL OUT WITH IT

MY LIEGE, OUR SEARCH FOR YOUR MISSING SON MAY BE AT AN END

OUR KUSHITE ALLIES SEIZED THIS ARGOSSEAN CAPTAIN HE HAS SOMETHING HE'S DYING TO TELL YOU

ISN'T THAT RIGHT, PALLANTIDES?

AYE, TROCERO, HE'S BURSTING TO SHARE HIS SECRET WITH THE KING.

GO ON, SPEAK UP OR YOU'LL SPEND A LONG TIME DYING

I'LL TALK I'LL TALK, ONLY YOU SWORE YOU WOULDN'T TORTURE ME...

THEN OUT WITH IT BEFORE WE CHANGE OUR MINDS!

"KING XANTALUS SENT ME AS A HERALD TO THE SORCERER CRASSUS."

"THE STYGIAN'S STRONGHOLD IS THE CASTLE OF EL MULLAH. OUR LATE ALLY. THERE THE SORCEROR PRATICES HIS BLACK ARTS..."

"AMONG HIS ENTOURAGE IS A YOUNG BOY SAID TO BE AN ADEPT IN THE OCCULT SCIENCES..."

PLEASE, LORD CRASSUS, HOW COULD WE HAVE STOPPED THE BOY? HE LEFT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT WITHOUT A SOUND.

SO. WHILE I AWAIT KING XANTAUS AND QUEEN LEORA OUR BIRD HAS FLOWN THE CAGE IT'S TOO LATE TO RECALL THEIR HERALD. THEY'LL ARRIVE EXPECTING TO TAKE THE BOY

MY LORD, THE BOY'S MAGIC HAS GROWN MORE POWERFUL THAN WE EVER DREAMED POSSIBLE

LOOK-- HE TORE AWAY THE BARS OF HIS CELL AS EASILY AS IF THEY HAD BEEN A SPIDER'S WEB WE HAD NO REASON TO SUSPECT BEFORE DAWN...

AYE, TAURUS'S POWER HAS GROWN RAPIDLY AND NOW HE HAS REBELLED AGAINST ME SOON, I WILL HAVE TO DESTROY HIM BEFORE HE DESTROYS ME.

LORD CRASSUS, WE BEG YOU TO SPARE US. HAVEN'T WE SERVED YOU FAITHFULLY

DON'T TAKE OUR LIVES, MY LORD, AND WE'LL OBEY YOUR SLIGHTEST WISH

WHY SHOULD I TAKE YOUR LIVES WHEN YOU CAN DO IT FOR ME

PLEASE, OBEY THIS SLIGHT WISH ..

UGGH...

AGONH...

SOON, TAURUS.. SOON... WE'LL MEET AGAIN AND THIS TIME IT WON'T BE AS MASTER AND PUPIL.

AT KING CONAN'S CAMP BEFORE THE WALLS OF KORDAVA.

BUT FATHER YOU HAVEN'T RECOVERED ENOUGH FROM YOUR WOUND TO LEAD A RAID. BESIDES, IT'S SO SIMPLE. WE JUST GO IN AND TAKE HIM.

THAT'S WHAT I DON'T LIKE, CONN. IT'S TOO SIMPLE.

A SMALL BAND OF HANDPICKED MEN IS ALL WE NEED FOR THE TASK.

COUNT ME IN, CONN, IF YOU'LL HAVE ME.

HE WILL DERYCK. WE NEED THE VERY BEST MEN WE HAVE FOR THIS.

IT'S A GREAT RISK, CONN. THE CHANCES FOR SUCCESS ARE SLIM.

THERE ARE TIMES WHEN TAKING A GREAT RISK IS BETTER THAN LIVING IN DOUBT, MY KING.

IT'S THE ONLY HOPE WE HAVE TO FIND TAURUS.

AYE, BUT REMEMBER, ANYONE WHO VOLUNTEERS GOES AT HIS OWN RISK. YOU CAN'T RISK THE MISSION FOR ONE OR TWO LIVES.

IT LOOKS LIKE THE SORT OF PLACE CRASSUS WOULD CHOOSE TO HAUNT.

HE'S WELCOME TO HAUNT IT ALL HE LIKES WHEN HE'S DEAD, RUFIO.

IT WILL BE DARK SOON. WE'LL WAIT UNTIL AFTER MIDNIGHT TO STRIKE. WITH ANY LUCK, CRASSUS WON'T LIVE TO SEE ANOTHER SUNRISE.

THERE IS A GREAT DISTURBANCE IN THE COSMOS TONIGHT. TAURUS'S POWER HAS GROWN BEYOND WHAT THE PRIESTS OF SET COULD HAVE EVER PROPHESIZED. WE HAVE CREATED SOMETHING WE CANNOT CONTROL.

MASTER MASTER, I CRAVE A WORD WITH YOU.

SILENCE-- YOU TOAD, THE COSMOS IS BEING REVEALED TO ME.

TAURUS IS MOVING THROUGH TIME AND SPACE. HE SUSPECTS THAT THERE IS SOME CONNECTION BETWEEN KING CONAN AND HIMSELF. WHEN HE LEARNS THAT HE IS CONAN'S SON, HE'LL TURN AGAINST ME.

LOOK AT HIM, HURLING HIMSELF THROUGH THE HEAVENS SEARCHING... SEARCHING..

AND THEN THERE'S ANOTHER SMALL DISTURBANCE. LET ME SEE, WHAT IS IT?

AH YES. YOU'VE COME TO WARN ME ABOUT INTRUDERS, HAVEN'T YOU, YOU MISERABLE WORM? THE NOBLE PRINCE CONN HAS COME TO RESCUE HIS BROTHER AND TO KILL ME.

YES... YES, MASTER. THEY'RE AQUILONIANS, I THINK.

WELL, THEN LET THEM ENTER. WHY BOTHER TO KEEP THEM OUT WHEN I CAN KEEP THEM IN-- *PERMANENTLY.*

MY POWER IS GROWING AS THE SERPENT'S VENOM TURNS MY FLESH INTO SCALES. DESTROYING CONN WILL JUST BE A PRELIMINARY TO FACING TAURUS FOR THE LAST TIME.

CAREFUL, RUFIO. I CAN'T PROMISE TO CATCH YOU IF YOU FALL.

IT'S MUCH TOO QUIET, CONN.

THERE'S NO TURNING BACK NOW, DEKYCK.

IF YOU HAVE ANY MORE COMFORTING THOUGHTS, I'LL THANK YOU TO KEEP THEM TO YOURSELF, CONN.

IT'S AS QUIET AS DEATH AND STYGIAN SORCERY UP HERE.

THERE-- ANYONE WHO DOESN'T WANT TO GO CAN TURN BACK NOW AND NOTHING WILL BE SAID.

I DIDN'T COME THIS FAR FOR NOTHING, CONN.

I FEEL WE'VE WALKED INTO THE SHADOW OF A GOD, CONN.

THEN LET'S TREAD LIGHTLY

THERE, MY PETS, YOUR VENOM IS THE SOURCE OF MY STRENGTH. IN TIME I'LL RESEMBLE YOU MORE THAN I WILL A MAN AS MY BLOOD BECOMES THE BLOOD OF THE SERPENT

WE'VE GOT TO REACH THE TOP OF THE KEEP AND WORK OUR WAY DOWN.

AYE BUT GETTING OUT WON'T BE AS EASY AS GETTING IN, I'LL WAGER.

BUT NOT AFTER TONIGHT, IF I HAVE MY WAY.

SO, CRASSUS, THIS IS WHERE YOU DO YOUR DEVIL'S WORK.

CRASSUS IS WAITING FOR US, CONN, I CAN SENSE IT

AVE THE HAIRS ON THE BACK OF MY NECK ARE TELLING ME THE SAME THING, DERYCK.

CRASSUS WILL SHOW HIMSELF WHEN HE'S READY AND NOT BEFORE

AYE, WE HAVE TO SEE IT THROUGH

WELL, I WOULDN'T MIND HAVING A MAGIC TALISMAN THAT I COULD COUNT ON RIGHT NOW

KEEP QUIET, THERE'S NO NEED TO MAKE IT EASY FOR THEM.

NO, THEY'RE PROBABLY WAITING FOR US AT THE MAIN GATE.

CRASSUS HASN'T POSTED ANY GUARDS IN THE KEEP.

NOW TO FIND THE CELL THAT THE ARGOSSEAN TOLD US ABOUT. I'LL SEARCH THE CORRIDOR AT THE TOP OF THESE STAIRS

WELCOME, PRINCE CONN, IT'S BEEN MUCH TOO LONG!

CRASSUS, YOU SPAWN OF THE DEVIL!

YOU'VE COME ON A FOOL'S ERRAND!

HA, HA, HA. YOU'LL HAVE TO TRY AGAIN, MY PRINCE!

THE BROTHER THAT YOU SEEK HAS GONE. BUT NOW THAT YOU'VE ARRIVED I CAN'T LET YOU LEAVE-- NOT NOW, NOT EVER!

I'LL SEE YOU SPITTED ON THIS SWORD FIRST, CRASSUS!

HA, HA, HA, THAT SWORD WAS MADE TO CUT FLESH AND BLOOD, NOT PHANTOMS!

I'LL KILL YOU, CRASSUS IF I HAVE TO WRING YOUR NECK WITH MY BARE HANDS!

TO DO THAT YOU'D HAVE TO PENETRATE THE SHIELD OF MAGIC THAT PROTECTS ME

AND THAT IS BEYOND YOUR POOR POWER

RUFIO-- LOOK!

AYE, SOMETHING TELLS ME THAT CRASSUS IS NEAR AT HAND!

I'M SO GLAD YOU BROUGHT SOME COMPANY, CONN SO YOU WON'T HAVE TO DIE ALONE!

WE'LL SEE WHO AWAKENS FIRST IN ARALLU, SORCERER!

GO ON AN' TRY, JESTER. THEN IT WILL BE MY TURN

HERE THEN!

YOUR DAGGER IS AS USELESS AS THE PRINCE'S SWORD!

CRASSUS HAS SPRUNG THE TRAP, CONN!

THEN WE'LL HAVE TO RUN FOR IT BEFORE HE CAN CLOSE IT!

AYE, CONN, LEAD THE WAY.

FIRST WE'LL HAVE TO CUT OUR WAY THROUGH THESE DOGS!

THE SOONER, THE BETTER, DERYCK!

BEFORE YOU DIE YOU'LL LEARN THAT SORCERY IS MORE TO BE FEARED THAN STEEL!

DON'T LOOK AT IT! IT'S ONLY A MAGICIAN'S ILLUSION! IT CAN'T HURT YOU!

HE'S DEAD-- SLAIN BY HIS OWN FEAR!

. UUCCCCCGGGHH

AYE, RUN--RUN AS FAST AS YOU CAN, IT WON'T SAVE YOU!

HOIST THAT PORTCULLIS IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIVES! DON'T LOOK BACK AT CRASSUS WHATEVER YOU DO!

AYE!

DON'T LOOK AT HIM OR HIS ILLUSIONS WILL MAKE THE FEAR IN YOUR HEART KILL YOU!

TURN AROUND AND FACE ON ME!

.. GAZE ON YOUR DEATHS!

HERE'S AN ILLUSION THAT CAN TEAR YOU LIMB FROM LIMB IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME LOOK AND SEE

FOR THE LOVE OF MITRA, RUN!

DON'T LOOK BACK! IT'S ONLY A MAGICIAN'S SPELL!

FO

AND STEEL WILL RETURN ITS POWER TO THE EARTH!

YOU'RE CLEVER, CONN BUT YOU WON'T LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO LEARN TO BEST ME!

GET UNDER THE PORTCULLIS NOW!

I'M NOT AFRAID OF HIS DEVIL'S TRICKS!

I PRAY TO MITRA THIS DAGGER FINDS YOUR HEART, CRASSUS!

YOU'RE CLEVER TOO, JESTER! LET'S SEE IF YOU'RE CLEVER ENOUGH TO ESCAPE!

GO ON AND JUMP! THE OTHERS WILL BE WAITING FOR US WITH THE HORSES!

YMIR BE PRAISED!

YMIR AND MITRA! LET'S RIDE CLEAR OF THIS ACCURSED PLACE!

RUFIO, RUN AND DON'T LOOK BACK!

AYE, I'LL HAVE TO RUN. I HAVE NO MORE DAGGERS TO HOLD HIM OFF!

BUT, I HAVEN'T RUN OUT OF MAGIC, TO STOP YOU, FOOL!

I'LL KEEP AT LEAST ONE OF YOU FOR MY ENTERTAINMENT!

THIS JESTER MAY PROVE TO BE MORE AMUSING THAN THE PRINCE

RUFIO, HURRY FOR THE LOVE OF MITRA!

IT'S ALL RIGHT, LITTLE JESTER WE'RE GOING TO ENJOY YOUR STAY!

CROM AND MITRA!

SEIZE THE JESTER AND LOWER THE DRAWBRIDGE. I WANT PRINCE CONN TO HAVE ONE MORE LOOK AT HIS FRIEND IN THE DAWN LIGHT!

AYE MASTER!

YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE NOW YOU LITTLE MAGGOT!

CONN, LOOK, THEY'VE GOT RUFIO!

TAKE A LAST LOOK NOBLE PRINCE!

CROM'S BLOOD!

RIDE ON, CONN, RIDE ON!

HOW TOUCHING. SUCH NOBLE SACRIFICE.

RUFIO'S RIGHT, CONN. WE HAVEN'T GOT A CHANCE OF GETTING HIM BACK NOW THAT THE HUNS'UP REMEMBER WHAT YOUR FATHER SAID, WE CAN'T RISK THE MISSION FOR ONE OR TWO LIVES!

I'LL GET H M BACK OR I'LL AVENGE H M CRASSUS WON'T WIN THIS TIME. I SWEAR IT!

WE'LL HAVE OUR SCOUTS WATCH CRASSUS'S POSITION HE CAN'T MOVE RUFIO WITHOUT OUR KNOWING ABOUT IT

AYE I'LL FOLLOW THEM INTO ARALLU IF I HAVE TO. BY CROM

LATER

RADEGUND, YOUR BROTHER IS STILL BEYOND OUR REACH.

I KNOW YOU DID EVERYTHING YOU COULD, DERYCK.

TELL ME THE REST, CONN

YOU WERE RIGHT, FATHER, IT WAS *TOO* SIMPLE TAURUS WAS GONE WHEN WE ARRIVED AND CRASSUS WAS WAITING FOR US IT WAS A MIRACLE THAT ANY OF US GOT OUT ALIVE

WHERE IS RUFIO, MY SON?

HE'S CRASSUS'S PRISONER FOR NOW.

THEN CRASSUS MUST HAVE PLANS FOR RUFIO IF HE DIDN'T KILL HIM OUT OF HAND.

RUFIO WILL HAVE TO WAIT FOR NOW, SIRE THE ENEMY IS FALLING BACK TO KORDAVA THEY MUST BE PLANNING TO ESCAPE BY SEA WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE THE CITY BEFORE THEY CAN BURN THE ZINGARAN FLEET.

AT THE CASTLE OF EL MULLAH, CRASSUS RECEIVES HIS ROYAL VISITORS...

I'LL ADMIT I'M DISAPPOINTED, CRASSUS, NOT TO FIND TAURUS HERE. BUT I WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO REPAY THIS JESTER FOR HIS INSOLENCE IN THE PAST.

AYE, XANTAUS, WE MAY BE ABLE TO USE THE FOOL TO BAIT A TRAP FOR PRINCE CONN.

IN THE MEANTIME, MY NOBLE SOVEREIGNS LEAVE TAURUS TO ME.

HE SUFFERS NOBLY, DOESN'T HE? IS THERE SOMETHING YOU WANT TO ASK HIM?

AYE, LET'S KEEP HIM ALIVE A LITTLE LONGER. THIS JESTER IS NO ORDINARY FOOL.

NO, I'M CONTENT TO WATCH HIM DIE A LITTLE BIT AT A TIME UNTIL HIS FRIENDS ARRIVE. WHAT DO YOU SAY, XANTAUS?

IT'S FINALLY COME BACK TO ME WHERE I'VE SEEN HIM BEFORE.

HE WAS COURT JESTER TO THE LATE KING AECHIDES OF CORINTHIA BEFORE THE MAGE CALIASTROS USURPED THE THRONE AND DROVE AECHIDES FAMILY INTO HIDING.

YES, CALIASTROS, MY OLD COLLEAGUE. HE'S FORGOTTEN MORE MAGIC THAN MOST OF US KNOW.

AND IN ORDER TO LEARN THE HIDING PLACE OF THE SURVIVORS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY OF CORINTHIA, CALIASTROS WOULD BRING THE ARMIES OF CORINTHIA IN ON OUR SIDE, WOULDN'T HE?

LEORA, YOU UNDERSTAND ME PERFECTLY.

ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS TO WRING THE TRUTH OUT OF WHATEVER'S LEFT OF THE FORMER COURT JESTER OF THE ROYAL HOUSE OF CORINTHIA BEFORE HE DIES.

IN KING CONAN'S CAMP...

CONAN, COULD IT BE THAT THE GODS DO NOT INTEND US TO FIND OUR SON? WHY ELSE WOULD THEY ALLOW RUFIO TO BE CAPTURED BY THOSE MONSTERS?

GODS OR NO GODS, I'LL FIND TAURUS AND AS LONG AS RUFIO HAS BREATH IN HIM, THERE'S A CHANCE WE'LL GET HIM BACK, TOO.

LOOK AT ME, HAVE I EVER MADE YOU A VOW THAT I DIDN'T KEEP?

NO, BUT WE'RE DEALING WITH SOMETHING NOW THAT IS BEYOND MORTAL UNDERSTANDING.

CROM AND MITRA, WHAT'S THAT SOUND?

GET DOWN, ZENOBIA!

THE GODS ARE STRIKING OUT AT US!

IT'S A SHOOTING STAR SENT TO DESTROY US!

MITRA, AM I ALIVE OR DREAMING?

HE LOOKS LIKE FLESH AND BLOOD TO ME-- *OUR FLESH AND BLOOD.*

I AM CALLED TAURUS, AN ADEPT IN THE BLACK ARTS FROM THE TEMPLE OF SET IN STYGIA, TRAINED BY THE PRIESTS THERE TO DESTROY YOU.

I WOULD HAVE DONE SO ALREADY, BUT SOMETHING STOPPED ME WHICH I CANNOT EXPLAIN.

TELL ME WHY I FEEL THAT THERE IS SOMETHING BETWEEN US?

COME AND JOIN US THEN. YOU HAVE MUCH TO LEARN... *SON...*

CONTINUED IN ISSUE #41:
THE BLOOD OF THE SERPENT

KING CONAN

℅ MARVEL COMICS GROUP
387 Park Avenue South
New York, New York 10016

LARRY HAMA
EDITOR
PAT REDDING
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Attention correspondents: if you don't want your full address printed, please be sure to tell us so!

Fellow Hyborians!

CONAN THE KING #33 was great! I can't wait for next issue's big bloody battle.

It's remarkable how much Conn has grown physically since Michael Docherty has taken over as the artist. Conn is so large and powerful now that I think old man Conan would consider his son to be a formidable foe.

Barbarically,
Keithnan

Keithnan?

Dear CTK,

CTK #36 was great. I enjoyed the way it was done. The artwork was the best part. I've just started to buy CONAN THE KING. Also, I am wondering what a No-Prize is. I am hoping that what I have found will entitle me to a No-Prize.

1.) In CTK #36, page 2, the lion on Conan's chest doesn't have an eye, ear, nor fur. On page 23, the lion has all three.

2.) Page 2, the face on Conan's helmet is white, but on page 22 panel 2, the face on his helmet is yellow.

3.) Page 22 panel 4: Conan's chest cloth is green and its buttons orange. On page 2, Conan is wearing blue, with yellow buttons keeping his cloak on.

4.) Page 22, panel 4, the armor around Conan's lower leg is gone. On page 2, Conan has shields around his lower leg.

5.) On page 24 in panel 3, the circle around the lion on Conan's chest is missing. There it is on panel 2 of the same page.

6.) On page 32, panel 4, the fur of the lion on Conan's chest is green. But on page 24, panel 2, the fur is yellow.

7.) On page 32, panel 4, Rufio's face doesn't have the red dots on it. On page 2, he has five dots, two on his forehead, two on his cheeks and one on his chin.

8.) On page 21, panel 1, Moira has a yellow bracelet on her right hand. On page 20, panel 4, she doesn't have a bracelet on at all.

9.) On page 9, in panel 1, Conan's horse has got a shield over its face. On page 2, there is none.

Does this entitle me to a No-Prize?

Richie Nolan
Russellville, AR

No, and read on CAREFULLY for the reasons why not. Anybody can point out an error . . . no special talent is needed for that, right? (One who is constantly calling attention to the flaws of others is bound to be avoided by the people he or she knows!)

But to earn a No-Prize, a constructive critic must use his wit to write in with a logical explanation for the supposed goof, and go on to describe why it is not an error at all. The "excuse" should be plausible, possible, and humorous. Sorry, Richie, no No-Prize, no cigar.

Dear CONAN THE KING,

A letters column title for CONAN THE KING? Hmm. "Hyborean Page" and "Chain Mail" have been taken, unfortunately.

With a bow to Bertrand Russell, how about "Who Shaves the Barbarian"? (Or, if Conan were a prominent, recent deceased New York lawyer, "Royal Conan.")

"Pens and Swords."

Here's one for a WWII mag: "Mortars and Epistles." Or, for a mag in which the protagonist is a thief, like Lawrence Block's "The Burglar Who" series, or Donald Westlake's "Hot Rock" series: "Crooks and Letters."

"Crommentary" is succinct. "Tell it to the Cimmerians" has the virtue of forcing the question, finally, of how to pronounce "Cimmerian," a hard or a soft C, what syllable to accent. If a hard C, then "Cimmerian Express."

If the editors aspire to godhood, then "Tell it to Crom" is adequate.

The problem is that too little is known about Conan's idiosyncracies, and the general medieval/barbaric motifs have been taken. Batman pioneered the "Batwhatisit" technique, so notably picked up by McDonald's and Apple MacIntosh. But Conan is not a Scot, though perhaps a proto-Scot. And he lacks a steady girlfriend, a tool, a sidekick or a pet dog.

So "Crom," "Conan," "barbarian," "Cimmerians" represent nearly all the slim pickin's of Conanalia.

"On His Majesty's Surface Mail"? "King Conan and Mr. Zip"? How about a series about a doctor who is a part-time barbarian? (Steve Bochco's next series.) "Sword and Surgery."

Cony's Express. Aquilonian Postal Service. The Royal Mail. Crom and Punishment.

Yours sincerely,
D.J. Stahl
New York City

Thanks, D.J., but we're sticking with our present monicker. It's short, to-the-point, and easy-to-remember, no? Your letter made it to us with no problem, anyway.

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(signed) Thomas Costello — Business Manager